

THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

ITS HISTORY, PURPOSE
AND ACTIVITIES



2 Eaton Gate, London
419 Fourth Avenue, New York
1934

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INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

I. History

Edinburgh Conference

It is universally agreed that the modern phase of missionary cooperation began with the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. Over one thousand were present at this meeting from all the lands sending out foreign missionaries. To a remarkable degree this Conference faced the wholeness of its task as well as its oneness. By the work of its eight commissions, through a period of nearly two years preceding the Conference, it helped greatly to usher in an era of more fundamental, because more international, study of missionary questions. That which gave the Conference its chief distinction, however, was the fact that it interpreted itself not as an end but as a beginning.

Out of that great gathering came a Continuation Committee, the purpose of which was to carry on the work begun by the Edinburgh Conference and to explore the possibility of organized cooperation between missionary societies on an international basis. This representative Committee of forty or more missionary leaders of different lands, through the helpful ministry of its central office, through its scientific quarterly, "The International Review of Missions", through various special committees, as well as through such means as conferences and visits by its members and other representatives, advanced by great strides the cause of international missionary cooperation.

The World War

This Continuation Committee ceased to function during the War owing to the difficulties, both physical and psychological, in securing a common meeting between representatives of different nations. Its work was carried on to a certain extent by an emergency committee of cooperating Missions, which was naturally devoted very largely to those problems in the relation of Missions and governments which were acutely raised by the War.

It was manifestly providential that the Edinburgh Conference and the Committees arising out of it had come into being before the outbreak of the War for two notable pieces of service to the missionary cause were performed by this international body, for so far as one could see they could hardly have been performed without it. All over the world missionary activity built up over many years by German missionary societies lay suddenly in ruins, and the fact that today the missionary societies are carrying on their work almost everywhere, is due in part to the fact that an international organization exists which was able to preserve the work of the German societies, to deal with the Governments regarding it and to enlist the help of missionary bodies in Great Britain, North America, and the continent of Europe, in the endeavor to maintain the work intact.

The emergency arising out of the War did not, however, only concern German Missions. The whole question of missionary freedom was raised. It was natural that governments controlling territories which in many cases were

acutely disturbed, should seek a measure of control of missionary work. Responsible missionary leaders were not disposed to deny the reality of the problems facing governments in this connection but they were not less alive to the importance of securing a real freedom for missionary activity. This principle was recognized in the drawing up of the post war treaties and the mandates that international missionary cooperation has secured for the future of this vital principle with the cordial consent of authorities concerned.

The Organization of the International Missionary Council

At the conclusion of the War the question of permanent organization for missionary cooperation on an international basis arose. It was obvious that a "continuation" of the Edinburgh meeting was no longer of value, not only because the Edinburgh Conference was steadily receding into the distance but still more because a body based on the Edinburgh Conference had no representative standing. Accordingly in 1920, after a preliminary meeting at Crans, the International Missionary Council was organized as the successor of the World Missionary Conference Continuation Committee and of the Emergency Committee of wartime. The Council thus organized met in America in 1921 and in England in 1923. The Committee of the Council met in England in 1922, America in 1924 and in Sweden in 1926. An enlarged meeting of the Council as a whole was held in Jerusalem in 1928. This was followed by meetings in 1929 in America and in 1932 in Germany of the Committee of the Council.

The Jerusalem Meeting.

The Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council was as great a milestone in the history of missionary cooperation as was the Edinburgh Conference itself. It was not a "conference" as was the gathering at Edinburgh but was an enlarged constitutional meeting of the International Missionary Council to which only those appointed by the constituent members of the Council were admitted. There were 250 people present, representing 52 different countries. At this meeting the Churches on the mission field, as well as the societies of the sending countries, sent official representatives. Studies were made of the seven outstanding problems in the missionary movement, the Christian life and message in relation to non-Christian societies of thought and life, religious education, the relation between the younger and the older churches, the Christian Mission in the light of race conflict, the Christian Mission in relation to industrial problems, the Christian Mission in relation to rural problems, and international missionary cooperation. Christian experts like Professor R. H. Tawney of the London School of Economics, Harold A. Grimshaw, Chief of the Native Labor Section, International Labor Office, Geneva, Dr. Kenyon L. Butterfield, Former President of Michigan State Agricultural College, and others, were invited to consult with Church and missionary leaders in planning a forward-looking program for missionary work.

It was the strength of this meeting that while it frankly faced problems such as the growth of industrialism in the East, the facing of the problems of rural areas and co-

operating with other bodies in research on national issues, it joined with these a powerful appeal for evangelism and exposition of its true basis and ground. In each case there is proof given of the intimate connection of each of these lines of work with the missionary movement in the older sense. They are the expression in relation to the needs of the modern world of the fundamental Gospel of redemption both of men and of nations.

One of the major accomplishments of the Jerusalem meeting was a review of the work and functions of the International Missionary Council and the revision of its Constitution. The new Constitution of the Council approved by all of the national organizations, makes membership in the Council not that of individuals but of national organizations. Perhaps this has always been implicit; it is now explicit, and is carried out logically in the new Constitution. Its importance lies in the fact that it defines clearly how the International Missionary Council ought to work. Its work must be done in and through the national organizations; then, in turn, in and through bodies which compose them. Ultimately all religious work is done by personalities, and it is an illusion to think that international activity has any meaning except as it somehow helps, strengthens and enriches the work of personalities - in leading souls to Christ, in opening the minds of children, in building the Church, in fighting illwill and hatred, in freeing the oppressed or in succoring the needy. But what it ought to do and what it can do is to set individuals to work so that their investigations become of worldwide value. Experience gained in one land can be made known in another and all be enriched thereby. Difficulties that seem insoluble in a limited setting

become easier of solution when it is seen how parallel situations have been faced.

The International Missionary Council in presenting its revised Constitution to the Jerusalem meeting reiterated with the added knowledge brought by the years the case for an international missionary organization, by suggesting the following reasons for its continuance and larger development:

1. The missionary enterprise is in all lands actually and manifestly international.

2. It is necessary to reveal the awareness on the part of the missionary movement of the international consciousness which pervades all departments of human progress.

3. There are many world situations involving missions with which it is impossible to deal except internationally.

4. A Christian missionary international organization is needed to represent missions in relations with other representative international bodies.

5. The essential spiritual unity already existing among Christians demands manifestation in international missionary cooperation.

II. Purpose

Those who at the Edinburgh Conference launched this great cooperative enterprise had as their original idea that ultimately the international organization should rest securely on national cooperative bodies, which in turn would be made up of official representatives of the

various missionary agencies and churches concerned. Whereas at Edinburgh there were only two of these national bodies in existence, a sufficient number of national bodies had been organized by the time the Continuation Committee was dissolved to make possible the carrying out of the original plan. This strong national cooperation is the foundation on which international cooperation has been firmly established. Today the International Missionary Council is composed of twenty-four national councils or conferences. A list of these in full will be found on page twenty-two. In India, China, and Japan national Christian Councils have superceded the old national missionary councils, or the continuation committees which look back to the Edinburgh meeting. National Christian Councils have also been organized in Korea, the Philippines, Siam, and the Near East. The Congo also has its Council of Protestant Missions. These national Christian Councils are built up on the basis of representation of missionary organizations and of indigenous churches. They owe much of their origin and growth to the help given by the officers of International Missionary Council since the days preceding the Edinburgh Conference. Today the International Missionary Council remains as a link between them and the different organizations of missionary societies in the Western World. There are national missionary conferences or councils of missions in the United States and Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as a Committee on Cooperation for work in Latin America.

It is a first principle in the work of

international missionary cooperation that the bodies set up, national or international, are advisory and not sovereign. The missionary societies or churches which enter into cooperation through the International Missionary Council do not surrender control of their policy to it. The task of the International Missionary Council is rather to focus attention on the greater issues which face all sections of the Church in its missionary work. It endeavors to promote study, thought, and action on such matters in different countries, and in particular to help in the vital process of bringing together the outlook and experience of many different countries for their mutual enrichment. Such international missionary cooperation is not something outside and apart from the churches and the missionary societies. It is theirs, and has no existence apart from them. It ought to be judged by no other standard than the degree to which it makes their work richer and more efficient.

With the Mandate of the Jerusalem meeting to guide it, the International Missionary Council has developed its work with a surer sense of its rightful place in the great missionary movement. The revised Constitution lists its functions as follows:

1. To stimulate thinking and investigation on questions related to the mission and expansion of Christianity in all the world, to enlist in the solution of these questions the best knowledge and experience to be found in all countries, and to make the results available for all who share in the missionary work of the churches.

2. To help to coordinate the activi-

ties of the national missionary organizations and Christian councils of the different countries, and to bring about united action where necessary in missionary matters.

3. Through common consultation to help to unite Christian public opinion in support of freedom of conscience and religion and of missionary liberty.

4. To help to unite the Christian forces of the world in seeking justice in international and inter-racial relations.

5. To be responsible for the publication of the International Review of Missions and such other publications as in the judgment of the Council may contribute to the study of missionary questions.

6. To call a world missionary conference if and when this should be deemed desirable.

III. Activities

Permanent Duties of the Council

In order to carry out these functions the International Missionary Council has established offices in London and New York. In the London office are two Executive Secretaries, Mr. William Paton, whose special interest is in India, and Mr. J. H. Oldham, who is in charge of a program for Africa. In the New York office Dr. A. L. Warnshuis is in charge. His major concern is with the Far East. The Chairman of the Council maintains an independent office and through constant travel keeps closely in touch with all the branches of the work of the International Missionary Council. The budget

of the Council maintains these two offices and finances the work which is carried on by them. In reality, however, they are only the small focal point from which activities essential to a progressive missionary policy radiate. These other activities, inspired and stimulated by the officers of the International Missionary Council, are entirely financed from sources outside the budget of the International Missionary Council.

Departments of the Council

While the general executive staff of the Council is small, the Council has realized that in specialized fields permanent organization is necessary to carry on a sustained program of work. Departments or Committees of the Council have been established in three instances. These departments are financed independently but the officers are appointed with the approval of the Council and the work is subordinate to the main interests of the Council.

One of these is the Department of Social and Industrial Research and Counsel of the International Missionary Council. This is under the direction of Mr. J. Merle Davis, with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. This Department is conducted entirely for the benefit of the missionary movement. Its activities are broad but its main purpose is single in its devotion to this cause. The first project completed by the Director is a study of the mining areas of Central Africa. This study was financed in large part by the Carnegie Corporation. The Report, which was published by Macmillan in London, contains far reaching recommendations for missionary policy

which, while bearing specifically on the Katonga Mining area, have implications for all missions working among primitive peoples coming in contact with a highly organized industrial civilization.

Another specialized interest of the International Missionary Council is its Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews. Dr. Conrad Hoffman, the Executive Secretary, acts as liaison officer between the groups working in this field in America and in England and on the continent. His tasks revolve primarily around the international aspects of this particular section of missionary work. His efforts have already raised the standards of Christian missionary work among the Jews by a vision of the largeness of the task which he has brought to its leaders. His Department is financed by the national groups devoted to this work and is not in any way a charge on the budget of the International Missionary Council.

The third committee related to the International Missionary Council is the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, with headquarters in London. Miss Margaret Wrong, the Executive Secretary, is charged with the development of a more adequate literature for Africa.

These Departments or Committees of the Council are organized on a permanent basis to carry on a consecutive program of work. While not a charge on the budget of the Council they are an organic part of it. It is hoped that through their continuous efforts, including

in their thought and work the problems and background of all denominational and national groups, that they will be able to focus attention on fundamental principles and lead the way toward the development of a policy that will strengthen the work of all groups.

Occasional Studies.

In the working out of certain problems it has proved more expeditious to finance special studies and follow this with Committee work of responsible Board executives under the leadership of the officers of the Council. One of the most pressing problems which emerged at the time of the Jerusalem meeting was that of the work for rural peoples. Prior to the Jerusalem meeting funds were secured for several careful studies of the work being done in this realm. One was Dr. Brunner's Survey of Rural Korea, another Dr. McKee's Survey of the Work of Christian Missions in Rural Areas. Dr. Kenyon L. Butterfield, one of the leading rural sociologists in America, was invited to attend the Jerusalem meeting as expert in rural work. Immediately following that he was sent to Africa by the Carnegie Corporation, and gave special attention to the way in which Missions were meeting the problems of rural life. The following year the officers of the International Missionary Council in America secured funds to enable Dr. Butterfield to go to India and make an intensive study of the missionary program there. That proved so helpful to all of the societies working in India that the Christian Councils of the Far East urgently requested the International Missionary Council to secure the finances which would enable Dr. Butterfield to spend a year in the Far East.

This he did in 1931-32. The results of these investigations were published by the International Missionary Council in two volumes, one, "The Christian Mission in Rural India," and the other, "The Rural Mission of the Church in Eastern Asia." The publication of these reports was only one of the incidental results of the two years which he spent in the Orient. The interest that he aroused, the vision that he gave to the missionaries and Christians working in little rural areas, and the conclusions that he helped them to arrive at, have created a new rural-mindedness in missionary circles which is showing fruits in a revision of program and a strengthening in the training of rural workers. There has since been organized in New York an Agricultural Missions Foundation under the leadership of Mr. John Reisner, which is conserving and building on the splendid foundation of interest which Dr. Butterfield's visits have created.

The whole problem of missionary education has been under fire for many years. The Phelps-Stokes Fund made two very careful and extensive studies of education in Africa which dealt incidentally with missionary education and was the forerunner of a definite Africa program by the Missionary boards. After the Jerusalem meeting requests were made for a careful and thorough study of Christian higher education in India, and in response to this request the International Missionary Council financed and sent out what is known now as the Lindsay Commission, a Commission of educational experts headed by Dr. A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol College, Oxford. His report "The Christian College in India", has formed the basis of a united program for higher education

in which all of the missionary societies in various countries are cooperating. This unified approach to one of the major problems of the Christian movement in India will result in a great strengthening of the whole movement.

Parallel to this is the Commission that was sent out to study higher education in Japan. This too was financed entirely by funds raised by the International Missionary Council outside of its regular budget, and has resulted in the organization of a committee of societies having work in Japan, which looks forward to the organization of a united program there.

Participation in Allied Studies

The International Missionary Council is the result of central organization for international missionary cooperation, and is in touch with a number of special projects that have been undertaken from time to time. The officers of the Council are alive to the problems of missionary work as a whole and lend their help to the organizing of projects in line with the best thought in all of the churches and are especially eager to see that the recommendations, when suggestions are made, receive the fullest possible attention. While this is not officially one of the functions of the International Missionary Council, practically it is one of the ways in which the Council serves the missionary movement as a whole. Because of its contact with various Mission fields and boards of all denominations the International Missionary Council has been in a position to advise and aid in these studies which have not been under its direction or financed by it.

After the Edinburgh Conference some of the

lines of study begun at that time were carried forward by special committees independent of the Continuation Committee. One of these studies with which the Continuation Committee and subsequently the International Missionary Council cooperated, was that of Christian Literature. Dr. John H. Ritson, Chairman of the Committee, completed a survey of Christian Literature in the Mission field, which was followed by a detailed investigation of the activities of the Moslem and Christian Press in all Mohammedan countries, undertaken by a joint Committee in the United States and financed by the Institute of Social and Industrial Research in New York. This eventuated in the organization of a Committee for Christian Literature among Moslems with headquarters in Cairo. A similar development has taken place in regard to literature for Africa, with the result that today there is an effective International Committee for Christian Literature for Africa working in conjunction with the International Missionary Council in London. The offices of the Council have watched these developments with great interest and wherever possible have aided them with their counsel and the facilities of their organization.

Another study, financed by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, was that made by Mrs. C. L. Matheson on "Industry in India". Mr. J. W. C. Dougall's studies of religious education in Africa and Miss Alice Van Doren's studies of Christian education in the villages of India are both outcomes of the discussion of the Jerusalem Meeting, and while not a part of the work of the International Missionary Council are peculiarly related to it. The deputation under the leadership of Dr. Jesse Lee Corley to study religious education in the Chinese Church was a project of the World

Sunday School Association which is expressly in line with the findings of the Jerusalem Meeting. The American Society of Church Historians sent out a deputation in 1931-32 to study the problems of the Church on the mission field and the teaching of Church History. In this the officers of the Council also gave their advice and help.

The International Missionary Council has helped to make available special studies that have been undertaken by individuals, but because of a limited field of interest cannot be marketed through commercial concerns. Such for example was the study of the "Place of Women in the Church and the Mission Field" undertaken by a Committee which reported to the Oxford meeting of the Council. The results of this study were published by the International Missionary Council. Dr. Ralph D. Wellen's thesis on the "Organizational set-up for the Control of Union Higher Educational Institutions" was also published by the Council.

International Review of Missions

The Review, edited by Mr. William Paton and Miss Underhill in the London Office of the Council, is one of the most important means used by the Council to make available to a wide constituency the results of continuous and thoughtful study of problems of missionary work. The pages of this periodical have furnished a stimulus and outlet for thoughtful studies of many of the phases of the modern missionary movement, which are of interest to leaders in all denominations and countries. It is a scholarly journal that serves to advance the study of the science of missionary work and to raise the problems above denominational or national limitations. The annual survey of missions prepared by the editors gives a timely and comprehensive view of Christian

work as a whole. The book reviews and bibliographies contained in each issue bring to international attention the most outstanding writings on Christian missions and its many allied fields of interest.

Investigation and Study by Staff Members

The staff members of the International Missionary Council including the Chairman, the Secretaries, and the Assistant Secretaries, have carried on special studies which have resulted either in published works or in special mimeographed papers. Dr. Mott's own books have had a wide influence in interpreting the work of modern missions in the life of today. His "Present-Day Summons to the World Mission of Christianity" puts succinctly and forcefully the situation this world around. His book "Liberating the Lay Forces" has been widely read among church leaders. A Chinese translation of it has recently been published.

Dr. Oldham's chief writings have had to do with the race problems and with education, especially in reference to Africa. "Remaking of Man in Africa", written jointly by Dr. Oldham and Miss Gibson, is basic to their whole educational program. Mr. Paton, besides editing the International Review of Missions, has written a number of books including "A Faith for the World" and "The Faiths of Mankind." Dr. A. L. Warnshuis has been more concerned with the problems of Missions and government, and the relation of the younger and older churches. With the assistance of Miss Strong, he recently edited a Directory of Protestant Missions which is a revision of the Directory in the World Missionary Atlas and is a compilation of information concerning the Mission Boards, societies, colleges, cooperative

councils, national church, and other agencies of the Protestant Churches of the world.

Religious and missionary freedom has been given continuous study as problems emerge in various parts of the world. Two studies on this subject have been published, namely, "Treaties, Acts, and Documents Pertaining to Religious Freedom" and "The Relations of Missions and Governments in Belgian, French and Portuguese Colonies." A paper on "Religious Liberty in the Near East", prepared by Miss Helen Clarkson Miller is another outcome of the Council's continuous interest in this subject. The Council offers a center to which all of the Boards working in an area in which there are government restrictions to their liberty or to the liberty of their converts may send in information and receive help in a united approach to governments. Concrete problems are constantly arising which call for definite action. In the realm of international relations the officers of the Council have often been able to give assistance and lead the way toward joint action by groups in different countries. This distinctive service of the International Missionary Council has become increasingly valued as international contacts multiply.

Cooperation in Missionary Work

While the Council itself has not initiated cooperative projects, it has effectively aided the Boards in undertaking the organization of committees and the cooperative consideration of joint problems. An illustration of this is the development in the United States, Great Britain, and India, of committees to consider the recommendations of the Lindsay report. In great Britain a committee was organized to consider the work of

of the English Boards in Bengal. In the United States the officers of the Council have served as the means for calling together a committee of the Boards for work in the Philippines to study their joint problems and as a result the Philippine Islands Council Board has been established. Plans are on foot for a joint consideration by the Boards concerned of the problems of missionary work in China and in Japan. The emphasis which the Herrnhut Meeting of the Council gave to these subjects has been a stimulus to further action by the Boards. Wherever possible the officers of the Council have helped to strengthen the work of missions through joint action. They have given continuous and quiet attention especially to problems in the development of missionary cooperation, evangelism and the Christian message.

Conferences

One of the ways in which the staff of the International Missionary Council finds it possible to work toward the formulating of sound missionary policy has been in the holding of interdenominational and international conferences. In 1923 Dr. Mott chairmanned a series of conferences dealing with Christian work among Moslems. Under his leadership several conferences have also been held on the problems of Jewish missionary work. The first two were held in 1927, in Budapest, and in Warsaw. After the formation of the International Council on the Christian Approach to the Jews, a third conference was held in Atlantic City in 1932. In 1927 a world conference on Africa was held in Le Zoute, under the leadership of Dr. Oldham. Conferences on the Missions and the modern Christian apologetic with special references to the training of the ministry, have been held in York, England, and

at Drew Theological Seminary in the United States. It is needless to remark that the meetings of the International Missionary Council itself, while not conferences, are an interchange of experience and opinion which is highly important in the development of a program of missionary work.

IV. Conclusion

In considering the work of the Council the importance of the continuous attention of its officers to the program of Missions as a whole and to that phase of missionary work which can best be undertaken through an international agency, such for example as the promoting of right relations between missions and governments and the joint dealing with critical and emergent problems of missionary work must not be minimized. While in some cases this work is specific and detailed, and can be pointed to as a practical result of funds invested in the Council's maintenance, in others it is dealing with the larger problem of policy and the development of the missionary message which is suited to the present world conditions and can therefore not easily be evaluated. One can only try to imagine what missionary work today would be like if there were no international missionary cooperation on a permanent basis. The missionary movement is primarily an international movement. While personal evangelism is the soul and center of the movement and the purpose of every organization connected with it, the very background in which it has its being is such that demands united, international and interdenominational study and action. The percentage of support which each missionary society gives to the maintenance of this arm of its work is small indeed compared with the demands that the situation makes upon it.

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